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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 270430Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7605
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USUN NEW YORK 591
CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0137

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM PFOR PINS PINT PORG EAID LA US TH
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE LPDR

REF A 76 VIENTIANE 1255, B 76 STATE 045319

SUMMMARY: HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN THE LPDR AS REPORTED
REF AA HAVE CONTINUED AND IN SOME AREAS GROWN MORE
FLAGRANT: 1) THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF TORTURE AND
EXECUTION OF SOME POLITICAL AND OTHER PRISONERS;
2) GOVERNMENT POPULATION CONTROL AND THOUGHT CONTROL
MEASURES HAVE INCREASED WITH FURTHER IMPRISONMENT WITH-
OUT TRAIL AND FOR INDEFINITE PERIODS OF PERSONS ACCUSED
OF "SOCIAL EVILS" OR OF HOSTILITY TO THE REGIME;
3) "PEOPLE'S COURTS" ARE DECIDING CASES IN THE ABSENCE
OF ANY PROMULGATED LEGAL SYSTEM; 4) GOVERNMENT FORCES
HAVE SHOT PERSONS SEEKING TO ESCAPE LAOS AND IMPRIONED
THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT; 5) THE GOVERNMENT HAS USED
THE BUDDHIST CLERGY TO PROPAGATE OFFICIAL POLICY AND
HAS CLOSED CHURCHES TO PREVENT ORGANIZED CHRISTIAN
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WORSHIP BY LAO CITIZENS; 6) JOINT LPLA-PAVN MILITARY
CAMPAIGNS AGAINST MINORITY TRIBESPEOPLE AND ANTI-
GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS CONTINUE WITH WESTERN PRESS REPORTS
OF THE USE OF GAS AND NAPALM AGAINST HMONG HILLTRIBES
PEOPLE; 7) THE GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE THE
U.S. WITH INFORMATION ON U.S. MIAS AND HAS NOT RESPONDED
TO THAI REQUESTS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THAI CITIZENS

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HELD BY LPDR AUTHORITIES. THE U.S. HAS NO INFLUENCE
ON LPDR POLICY IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS. END
SUMMARY.

1. AS NOTED REF A, THERE ARE NO HUMAN RIGHTS IN LAOS.
THERE ARE NO LEGAL GUARANTEES AND NO CONSTITUTION HAS
BEEN PROMULGATED NOR ELECTIONS HELD. WHAT RUDIMENTARY
JUDICIAL PROCESSES EXIST ARE BASED ON ARBITRARY
DECISONS. THOUSANDS OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFI-
CIALS UNDER THE FORMER GOVERNMENT WHO WERE SENT TO
REMOTE REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY OVER A YEAR AGO TO
UNDERGO THOUGHT REFORM REMAIN THERE IN PRISON CAMPS.
IN ADDITION, ORDINARY CITIZENS ACCUSED OF "SOCIAL
EVILS" AND CRITICISM OF THE REGIME CONTINUE TO BE
ARRESTED AND SENT TO "REHABILITATION CENTERS". THE
LPLA WITH THE SUPPORT OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAS IN-
CREASED ITS MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST ANTI-GOVERNMENT
INSURGENTS INCLUDING MINORITY TRIBESPEOPLE.

2. SINCE THE APRIL, 1976 REPORT ON THE STATUS OF
HUMAN RIGHTS IN LAOS, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF
TORTURE AND EXECUTION OF SOME OF THE ESTIMATED 40,000
POLITICAL AND OTHER PRISONERS. A ROMAN
CATHOLIC NUN RELEASED FROM SAM KHE PRISON WHERE SHE
WAS CONFINED WITH APPROXIMATELY 700 OTHER PRISONERS
FROM MARCH TO SEPTEMBER, 1976, TOLD OF THE MANACLING
OF PRISONERS FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME WHICH
INDUCED PARALYSIS AMONG SOME INMATES. SHE ALSO TOLD
OF PRISONERS BEING PLACED IN SACKS AND BEATEN TO DEATH.
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LIVING CONDITIOS WERE REPORTEDLY POOR, PRODUCING WIDE-
SPREAD INSTANCES OF MALNUTRITION AND BERIBERI.

3. A RETURNEE FROM A PRISON CAMP IN PHONG SALY
PROVINCE WHICH REPORTEDLY HELD 300 PRISONERS AT FIRST
BUT WHICH LATER EXPANDED ITS POPULATION MANY FOLD TOLD
OF EXECUTIONS AND HARSH LIVING CONDITIONS WHICH CAUSED
DISEASE AND DEATH AMONG THE PRISONERS.

4. ORINARY CITIZENS HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO PROVIDE
DETAILED PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THE AUTHORITIES, AND
THE GOVERNMENT HAS EXERCISED INCREASING CONTROL OVER
THEIR MOVEMENT.

5. LARGE NUMBERS OF ORDINARY CITIZENS WERE ARRESTED IN

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1976, MOST OF WHOM WERE IM-
PRISONED IN "REHABILITATION CENTERS" ON ISLANDS IN THE
NAM NGUM RESERVOIR, LIKE THOSE ARRESTED IN APRIL AS

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REPORTED REF A.

6. THE ISLAND CAMPS ARE FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED AS DRUG TREATMENT CENTERS THOUGH LESS THAN ONE QUARTER OF THE PRISONERS ARE DRUG USERS. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE ISLANDS APPEARS TO BE TO INSTILL LOYALTY TO THE REGIME AND ADHERENCE TO COMMUNISM THROUGH CONCENTRATED PROPA-GANDAAND DEPRIVATION OF CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. A NUMBER OF WESTERNERS WHO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY LPDR OFFICIALS ON CONDUCTED TOURS OF THE ISLANDS REPORT THAT THE STRICT REGIMENTATION AND DETAILED STRUCTURING OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INMATES ARE SIMILAR TO THE PRACTICE OF PENAL INSTITUTIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

7. SINCE APRIL, 1976, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS IN THE PRESS AND FROM OTHER SOURCES OF "PEOPLE'S COURTS" COM-POSED OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE SELECTED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT WHICH ROUTINELY RENDER JUDGMENTS SUPPORTING CHARGES PRESENTED BY THE PROSECUTION. THE ACCUSED ARE NOT OFFERED ACCESS TO COUNSEL BUT ARE OCCASIONALLY ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN DELIBERATIONS REGARDING THEIR CASES.

8. SINCE APRIL, 1976, THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT PERSONS FLEEING THE LPDR TO THAILAND HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UNDER FIRE BY LPLA BORDER GUARDS AS THEY SEEK TO CROSS THE BORDER. THOSE CAUGHT SEEKING TO LEAVE HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED.

9. LAOS HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A BUDDHIST NATION, AND THE LPDR HAS BEGUN TO UTILIZE SYSTEMATICALLY THE BUDDHIST CLERGY TO PROPAGATE MARXISM-LENINISM AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF RELIGION, EDUCATION AND CULTURE, SAID IN OCTOBER, 1976: "THEY (THE BUDDHIST MONKS) SHOULD MIX THE THEMES OF CURRENT POLITICS AND BUDDHIST POLITICKS IN GIVING SERMONS AND USE EXAMPLES FROM CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS SO THAT THE PEOPLE WILL EASILY UNDERSTAND THEM."

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PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 DPW-01 /090 W
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R 270430Z JAN 77
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10. BOTH BUDDHIST AND CHRISTIAN PLACES OF WORSHIP HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE GOVERNMENT, USUALLY FOR USE AS SEMINAR HALLS FOR POLITICAL/ECONOMIC/CULTURAL INDOC-TRINATION CENTERS. ONLY ONE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIENTIANE CONTINUES TO HOLD WEEKLY SERVICES, PRIMARILY FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND FOREIGN COMMUNITY. ONE PROTESTANT CHURCH ALSO HOLD WEEKLY SERVICES FOR A SMALL NON-WESTERN CONGREGATION.

11. SINCE APRIL, 1976, THE LPDR HAS CONTINUED TO WAGE WAR AGAINST SOME ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN LAOS, NOTABLY THE HMONG. THE LPLA HAS RECEIVED PERSONNEL AND LOGISTICS SUPPORTS FROM VIETNAMESE REGULAR TROOPS. THE WESTERN PRESS HAS CARRIED REPORTS OF THE LPDR'S USE OF GAS AND NAPALM AGAINST THE HMONG.

12. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN IS TO FORCE THE HMONG AND OTHER ETHNIC MINORITIES WHO INHABIT REMOTE MOUNTAINOUS AREAS TO ABANDON THEIR UPLAND HOMES AND MOVE TO THE LOWLANDS UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL,
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THERE TO ENGAGE IN WET-RICE FARMING "LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE". THE RESULT HAS BEEN THE DISRUPTION OF A CENTURIES-OLD WAY OF LIFE AND THE EROSION OF ACIENT TRIBAL IDENTITIES.

13. THE LPDR HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WITH ANY INFORMATION REGARDING THE APPROXIMATELY 320 OUTSTANDING MIA CASES IN LAOS. THE LAO GOVERNMENT HAS

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NOT UNDERTAKEN ANY SPECIFIC EFFORTS TO PRODUCE AN ACCOUNTING, OTHER THAN REPORTEDLY TO ASK LAO CITIZENS WHO LOCATE CRASH SITES OR OTHER MIA INFORMATION TO REPORT THE INFORMATION TO THE GOVERNMENT.

14. THE LPDR HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE THE THAI GOVERNMENT A LIST OF THOSE THAI CITIZENS IT HOLDS IN CUSTODY DESPITE NUMEROUS REQUESTS BY THE THAI EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE THAT IT DO SO.

15. THE UNITED STATES GIVES NO ASSISTANCE TO THE LPDR AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS NOT SUSCEPIBLE TO OUR INFLUENCE IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS. NEVETHELESS, WE HAVE MADE REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF AMERICAN MIAS AND ON BEHALF OF ARRESTED AMERICAN CITIZENS. THE EMBASSY HAS ALSO SOUGHT INFORMATION ON LAO AND THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL EMBASSY EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.

16. COMMENT: THE LPDR ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS CHRONICLED ABOVE HAS BEEN PREVIOSLY REPORTED BY THE EMBASSY. SUCH REPORTS, HOWEVER, ONLY SUGGEST THE LEVEL AND NATURE OF HUMAN-RIGHTS ABUSES IN THE LPDR. LAOS REMAINS A CLOSED SOCIETY WITH NO OPPORTUNITY FOR TRAVEL BY NEUTRAL PERSONS CAPABLE OF OBSERVING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE LPDR. REPORTING OF SUCH VIOLATIONS MUST THEREFORE BE BASED ON REFUGEE AND ESCAPED PRISONER ACCOUNTS AND A FEW OBSERVATIONS BY CONFIDENTIAL

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FOREIGNERS TRAVELING UNDER OFFICIAL ESCORT. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE AVOIDED REFERENCE TO GOVERNMENT ACTIONS WHICH INFRINGE UPON HUMAN RIGHTS.
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